

Army Series.]

[No. 6.

THE HOME TO THE HOSPITAL.

ADDRESSED TO THE

SICK AND WOUNDED OF THE ARMY OF THE UNION.

BY

JOHN F. W. WARE.

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THE HOME TO THE HOSPITAL,

GREETING :

FATHERS AND BROTHERS, HUSBANDS AND SONS !

A FEW months ago you went from us in all the promise and hope of your manhood. The duty which called you was one which we had no right to resist, though it compelled us to part with those in whom is our life. We would not prevent you, but gave you our tears and our blessings. We have followed you faithfully since. In your homes, in our hearts, you are never forgotten. With prayer we dismissed you, with prayer have we followed you, hoping it might please the Great Father to lead you onward to victory, and then bring you back to us saved from the peril. We have shared with you privations, exposures, successes, reverses. The blow that has struck you has wounded us also. We feel that the ties which bound us before are strengthened by your absence and endurance, and we trust that you feel the old home-love still about you, its invisible presence and influence enfolding, upholding you.

NO. VI.

Before the work is accomplished, you are withdrawn. The fortune of war has taken you out of the active duties of camp and of field. Sickness has laid its hand on you: the bullet and the sword have found you. Separate alike from comrades and from home, you no longer share in the fatigue of the march, the excitement of the picket, the rough pleasures of the bivouac, or the dangers of battle. The strong limbs which have borne you under hot suns, pelting storms, heavy burdens, refuse now their service, and you, once sufficient to your own wants, must now wait for the ministries of others. The might of the warrior is less than the strength of a child. Only in heart are you strong.

We long to be with you, to show that we love as we speak, and, by such service as only home can bring, to soothe your sorrows and pains. But it cannot be. It is hard, but it is best. Faithful and tender assistants and nurses watch over you, not, indeed, as we would, not as mother and sister and wife. We bless them for their unselfish devotion, and submit to the necessity that keeps us away. We will be patient and hope. Do not think we speak idly, when we beg you likewise to submit, be patient, and hope!

One of God's best gifts, sickness, is never welcome to man. It is never easy to bear. Suffering and weariness will come even where affection and wealth strive to avert them. The nameless

ministries of love mitigate but little the raging of fever, the tossing of unrest, the lingering of day and of night. They give us courage and patience, they soothe, but they cannot take away the burden laid on the sufferer, which he only can bear. The angels who ministered to Jesus soothed him and strengthened him, but they could not take from him the cup the Father had ordained he should drink.

You are not at home. You have not these alleviations. The rough though faithful service of comrades, the kind and gentle care of nurses, lack just that which only home can give, while bare walls and crowded wards and narrow beds, how unlike they are to the quiet and seclusion of home! Pain and disease come to you in their full sharpness and horror. We know that the soldier dreads the hospital more than the battle, — that he fears not its pains, but its scenes and depressions. We know that the wearying pining for home, the malady the surgeon cannot reach or the nurse assuage, adds tenfold to the anguish from disease or from wound. In all that we have to say, we beg you to feel that we understand this; that our advice and encouragement grow out of this understanding.

To many of you this is every way a new experience. The fact of sickness itself is new. It is the first break in a rude, vigorous life. You have known other hardships, privations, but nothing like this. The thought of your country's peril nerved

you to break away from the ease and occupations of life ; the thought of her gratitude, the glory of helping in her redemption, have sustained you in all you have passed through. You have done much and borne much. It will be written on the page of history, and never forgotten. Your names may not be known, but your deeds will shine forever. Now a harder task is yours, — the patient, manly bearing of the inevitable lot which has struck at your hopes, removed you from active service, and sends you back to us, not heroes, as you and we had dreamed, but feeble, maimed, possibly a burden through life to yourselves, and you may think a burden to us ; but the home will never feel that, when her children come with still loyal hearts and lay their woes at her feet.

Because you are struck down by the way, do not think your work has not been done. The true patriot enlists to serve his country. It is not for him to decide the manner in which he shall render that service. There are two ways in which every great cause is to be served, — two classes of servants to work out the will of God. The great poet has uttered only half the truth when he says, "They also serve who only stand and wait." It must be added, They also serve who live to suffer. No cause is a success till it has been suffered for. So long as the Saviour walked in Judæa and Galilee, uttering great truths, doing kind deeds, his cause

did not advance, it was not a success. But when Paul could point to him as "Christ *crucified*," as "the Captain of our salvation, made perfect through suffering," then all religions yielded, and the Gospel triumphed. To carry out his purposes, to insure success to the noblest causes, God needs the sufferer as well as the doer.

Nor is it the less noble place God gives the sufferer. Men give their award to deeds, — to heroes, generals, conquerors. But men make great mistakes. In the noise and plaudit which attend feats of arms, which welcome those who come home unscathed, wearing the laurel of victory, you may find no mention, but your service will not be forgotten of God. He appoints you to a great duty. You have done much and would gladly do more. *He has elected you to help him, to serve your country now, by suffering.* You left us saying that it was sweet to die for your country. Men have fallen with such words on their lips. Will you, then, hesitate to accept this other mode of suffering for her? It does not dazzle the imagination so to live and suffer as it does to die. Men love better to be the hero than the martyr, and they honor the one rather than the other; but there may be as much real heroism on the cot of the hospital as on the battle-field, — infinitely more in a life of endurance than in the passing pang of what men call a "glorious" death. The catalogue of saints and martyrs

outshines that of heroes and soldiers, as a sun outshines a star. If we may place at the head of one Washington, "the Father of his country," at the head of the other stands Jesus, "the Saviour of man." In one of his letters home, a young private states the whole truth: "Nothing can be gained without sacrifice. Many brave hearts have ceased to beat in this noble cause. We should be poor patriots should we be less forward. For *whatever* I am needed I am ready and shall be content."

Let your spirit be such. Be content with the way in which it pleases God that you shall now serve your country's cause, and accept it as from him. You are not out of service,—you are not useless. It has been sweetly as truly said by one of the tenderest writers of song:—

"Cast as a broken vessel by,
Thy will I can no longer do ;
Yet while a daily death I die,
Thy power I may in weakness show ;
My patience may thy glory raise,
My speechless woe proclaim thy praise."

This is not mere poetry. It is truth,—truth hard for us to accept, but nevertheless *truth*. Action, daring, success, are not the only modes of forwarding the good cause. The humble sufferer has his part in the great work,—helps to round and complete the whole. If it be sweet to *die* for one's country, it is honor and privilege to *suffer* for it! You would not halt at the first; do not shrink from the last!

And it will always be an honor to you to have suffered in this cause, — a thing justly to be proud of, a glory about your manhood and your age. The soldier of other countries holds up his head, “shoulders his crutch,” points to his wounds at the name of Waterloo, or Napoleon. All the old fire burns in his veins again. Has any soldier of Europe that to be proud of which you have? Is any veteran of them all scarred in a service holy as yours? He was the hireling of a monarch, the conscript of a restless, unscrupulous warrior. You—not soldiers by trade, not conscript or drafted, in the field only till the evil is past—have thrown aside everything else, and *voluntarily* given yourselves to the service of liberty, of humanity. Others have endured much, struck strong blows for their own redemption. You fight for the race, to re-establish what your fathers declared, what your fathers not only died for, but suffered for, — to plant anew, no “sounding, glittering generality,” but a cardinal, eternal truth, — man’s inalienable right “to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” Others have struck for their altars and their hearths, you for the principle without which altars and hearths are vain. It shall be settled once for all, and now, you have said, that *man* is free! In that cause you are wounded, in that cause you are laid low by disease. Better than medal, or ribbon, or cross of honor, the badge you must carry, perhaps to your

grave, in your body,—the proof of your fidelity to your country, to your race, to your God.

We address the sick as the wounded. We class you together. We hold you as one, as equally entitled to our gratitude, equally the servitors of God and of home. There has been some injustice toward those who are "*only*" sick. "I wish I were wounded," said a sick soldier; "then I, too, should get some attention and sympathy." We have seen the thick crowd about the man who was wounded, while the man *only* sick, faithful in every duty of camp and of battle, sick because he was faithful, was left, like the impotent man of old, to the charity of some chance spirit of mercy. We have thought that a something too much was done for the wounded; that charity and sympathy, not always discreet, had been carried too far in one direction, not far enough in the other. All this has pained us, and we know it must pain those so unfortunate as to be *only* sick. There is neither kindness nor justice nor wisdom in this. Wounds appeal to a certain popular sympathy as disease cannot. Disease is an every-day thing. It has no romance about it. It does not speak as a wound does to the imagination, to the masses. A wound is no special sign of bravery or exposure, nor is the sick man less a brave man because his chance is to be untouched by the battle. There is other hard and wearing and dangerous service beside the fight. We cannot cure the world,

and it may be that you will have to submit to this sort of injustice from those who only regard the outside; but be sure that home will never make this distinction. She will pray, she will toil for, she will welcome and watch over, the manhood diseased just as cheerfully as the manhood crippled. The sick man as the wounded shall have equal honor, and their rest within her embrace shall be equally sweet.

There are intervals in all recovery from sickness — and such will come to you — when the pains of the body are still, when lassitude passes, leaving the mind not merely calm, but disposed to activity. There is then a depth and clearness of moral perception and conviction such as one rarely arrives at in the hurry and pressure and delusions of health. The man is to himself, and life is to him, quite unlike what they have seemed. The shams in him and about him recede, and in their place stand great realities and duties. Too many suffer these seasons to glide away in delicious, dreamy repose, and so lose one of the greater blessings a divine mercy has attached to the mission of sickness. We ask you to guard against this, not to yield to the fascinations of a luxurious indolence, but rouse yourselves to the duties demanded, and of which you are capable. If there is ever a time that a man will be honest with himself, — when he will probe and spare not, — it is when, aside from the demands and pretence of the world, the things which have led him and

deceived him stand stripped of their power and charm. He is the soldier resting on the field after the fight, calmly and clearly surveying the past, as calmly and clearly getting ready for the future. As no soldier would refuse to profit by such a pause, so should no man. He omits it at his peril. Losing it, he makes eternal loss. The true man will use this opportunity, this privilege God throws in his way and supplies with incentives and helps, so that when he goes into active life again, — becomes in it a force once more, — he shall know that he carries with him new power and wisdom and virtue, is every way stronger and wiser and better. God gives man these now and then halting seasons, that he may prepare for new and right action. To lose one is to lose his intended blessing.

Sickness has duties no less than health. They are peculiar, many, definite, — small in themselves perhaps, yet in their aggregate of vital importance. There are no furloughs in the service of God. None is discharged in that warfare. Duty follows a man, though he be suffering. The sick man, the man plodding through a weary convalescence, is apt to think his unreasonableness, his irritability, quite pardonable. He cannot help them. He expects quick, kind, patient service. He has a right to demand these. But he forgets that those who wait on him have their rights too. He frets, is peevish, exacting. He does not blame himself for it; others

have no right to blame him. The fault is in his condition. This is not so. Make every reasonable allowance and deduction for the uncontrollable demands of nerves and weakness and hope deferred, there is a large amount of sick-room irritability which a man can control, if he only remembers that, though sick, he is still on duty, and, as a man, bound always to control himself. No true man should be willing to throw himself, as a dead weight, utterly upon the sympathy and charity of others. He will not yield to every whim, every impatience, every craving, but curb himself, and spare, as he can, his faithful attendants. The sick man is not only to be ministered unto, but in turn to minister; not weakly to receive, but bravely to give; to show his courage upon a bed as he would in a battle; to keep his sufferings back rather than thrust them selfishly forward. As he lies there, he is an influence; he may be a blessing. What good a single unselfish spirit may do in a hospital ward! How he will shame the fractious and discontented, how he will cheer the depressed, and with what brave hope will he re-nerve the timid and despairing! With what alacrity weary feet will do his bidding! And so, though lying there helpless and suffering, he becomes almoner of the rich treasures of an unselfish heart, a benediction alike to patient and nurse. There shall never be written on human pages the triumphs of the lowly and suffering; but

in that book God keeps ever open, and where nothing is omitted, they will all shine, and brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

Briefly let us point you to three things which we at home think you should specially strive to attain.

And, first, *Patience*. Almost it seems as if it were needless for us to speak of this, so universal is the witness that comes up from battle-fields, from transports, from hospitals, of the marvellous patience of our dear sufferers. The heroism of the field has been followed by the harder heroism of the hospital. This is not always so. Many a man can fight who cannot bear, — is patient while active, impatient when suffering. The world does not know its true heroes yet; but the home, admiring your deeds, prizes, as your crowning glory, the heroism of your sufferings. She approves your patience amid the hardships of the field, but she clasps you to her heart for your endurance of sickness and wound.

Still there is something to be said. Patience is not a manly virtue, nor a grace that we covet. It is one of those things we have been quite willing to allow to women. We have made Job a byword. The world sadly needs patient men; and there are sadly impatient men in hospitals. You who were impatient at home will be impatient there. But now something more than our comfort or your self-respect is involved. You need patience as one means of recovery. The man who frets retards his

recovery by fretting. Besides, patience is the only return you can make the faithful men and women who so unweariedly, day and night, watch over you ; who have left their homes, and their ease, and their comfort, and are, many of them, without money and without price, giving themselves wholly to you. Duty called them to you. The same duty calls on you to show your gratitude by the steadfastness of your patience.

But patience is not enough. It is a high virtue, but it needs support. A mere dogged patience, the bracing of the will or the nerves to bear quietly, will not do. The hospital needs *cheerfulness*. It is to the spirit what sunlight is to the room. It does for the inward man what the light does for the outward. There can be no physical health in a cheerless room, or with a discontented heart.

It is possible for every man to be cheerful, whatever his lot. Cheerfulness is not a thing of outward conditions. It springs from within. It is not merely the grace of a full heart, it is often the charm of a sad one. God *gives* it to some men, but all men may acquire it, and the thing acquired is always sweeter and stronger than the thing given. That is only half courage which bears up under dangers and hardships. The highest courage lies in cheerful bearing. God loves a cheerful bearer, and comes to him with his great strength and help.

You all desire to get out of the hospital, back to

your duties or your homes. Nothing has so much to do with this as cheerfulness. Disease is determined largely by mental conditions. Convalescence is slow and protracted, or pleasant and sure, according as the man keeps himself. Fret beneath the rod, be timid, irresolute, self-seeking, and your burden will be a burden indeed, — heavy, galling, dead, — but “put a cheerful courage on,” and you will find the burden growing easy and light. Even love gets tired of doing, forgets its sympathy, intermits its tenderness, where there is churlish exaction and selfishness.

One word about that highest thing, which indeed embraces all, but which we keep separate, and speak and think of as separate, — *Faith*. The man who has a clear, upright, manly Christian faith, — not a mere name, but a living thing in him, — has patience and cheerfulness as all other Christian virtue and grace. Yet these may exist without this, — and so the home says, as her last word to you, Add to these *Faith*. This war has spoken to you as even your Bibles have not before. You cannot have passed these scenes, you cannot have lain on bloody field, in narrow cot, you cannot have had these angel ministries succeed the savage assault of battle, without feeling all this various experience drawing you more and more into the presence of, into dependence upon, the great Unseen Spirit. If there be no deeper conviction in you, no more earnest purpose of loyal

service, no stronger yearning to be sons of God, then indeed are your eyes holden and your hearts hard. By the baptism of blood it was that Jesus became lifted up before all men, became the world's Redeemer; and the baptism of blood may work alike mightily in you, perfecting what was unworthy, drawing you toward the All Pure, giving you the coveted spirit of adoption. It is only a living, unwavering Christian faith that sustains any man. Do not let these hours slip, do not pass hence to your homes again, or back to your duties, without possessing that surcly which shall be your sufficient help in the time of all trouble. To the God who has been so plenteous in mercy give the remainder of your strength and your days.

Fathers, husbands, brothers, sons ! Some of you will go back to the active scenes and duties of camp and field, — to temptations and dangers. This sickness is not unto death or disability. Go to these as new men, as men profited, purged by the rich experience of discipline with which it has pleased God to visit you. Go back happier and wiser, leaving the low and the bad behind, and pressing forward, as the Apostle did, toward the mark, for the prize. Remember how great a loss it is to lose an opportunity. God has called others — your comrades — suddenly. You he has withdrawn, that you might think, repent, resolve, amend. The opportunity is a privilege. Do not

despise it, — and when, in other days, in the circle of those you love, you recount the scenes of daring and danger through which you have passed, and take to yourselves honest pride for your faithful discharge of your duty, and feel their love and respect for what you have done, may there lie in your hearts the better and deeper conviction, that, while the field gave you honor with men, the hospital insured you the “Well done!” of God.

Some of you, dear friends, must quit the hospital to come home to us, to realize that your early promise is blighted, that you cannot again take a place in the race with your peers, that life’s prizes are not for you. It will be a sad coming for you and for us; for are not our hopes crushed in yours? You were our pride, our confidence, our tower of strength. How little seemed the world’s ills when we had you to lean on and to hope in! But come to us, dearly loved, nothing fearing. The change is sad and terrible. We prayed against it in vain. We accept it; and, in the spirit of the English maiden of our fathers’ day, whose lover doubted if she would keep her vow to one so bruised and maimed, home says to you, “Come, and, if there be but body enough to keep the soul in, we will receive you gladly as ours, and our lives shall be yours.” Do not you come to prey upon the noble unselfishness of home. Remember her suffering in yours. Do not add to the inevitable burden by any ugly spirit, any evil habit,

any hard ingratitude, but let the marring of your body and the cutting you away from manly pursuits lift you into that nobler manhood which Christ and Paul have shown us are to be reached through suffering.

Some of you (we speak it gently and reverently) must die, — die in your early prime ; die when life has so much for you ; die — and how shall we live without you ? God has terrible teachings for all in this strife ; but his teachings are not all dark. “Paternal love o’er all presideth.” The form in which the spirit of love chooses to address us we may not understand : we cannot doubt the spirit. Said a young private, as he was leaving home, to one who spoke of the dangers before him, “If one can only say, *OUR FATHER*, there is no fear.” That was the perfect love which cast all fear out. In that faith that young man died, — not on the battle-field, as he would have preferred, but on the cot of the hospital, away from all he loved and longed to see, yet yielding up a loyal heart peacefully, because he could say, “*OUR FATHER*.” That is the great all in all ; and for such the door of the Father’s home stands day and night open. His arms and his welcome await them.

Dear friends of the home ! whatever betide you, be cheerful, be patient and trustful. The dark days shall pass. This life has its awards, — the glory and honor that perish ; but the rewards of eternity are honor and glory immortal.

